Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1.(currently amended)   A method for encoding an input bitstream of an input signal comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving the input bitstream;

extracting non-essential information from the input bitstream to generate a reduced bitstream;

re-encoding the non-essential information to generate re-encoded data in accordance with a different encoding rule than used for <u>encoding</u> the non-essential information in the bitstream; and

including the re-encoded data in a user data element associated with the reduced bitstream.

2.(original)   A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the user data element is a user data section of the reduced bit-stream.

3.(original)   A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the user data element is comprised in a separate bit-stream.

4.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the ~~step of~~ extracting non-essential information comprises removing non-essential data corresponding to the non-essential information from the input bitstream.

5.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the ~~step of~~ extracting non-essential information comprises modifying quantisation levels of the reduced bitstream.

6.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the ~~step of~~ re-encoding comprises a compression of the non-essential information.

7.(original)   A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the non-essential information corresponds to less significant data values associated with the input signal.

8.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising ~~the step of~~ determining the non-essential information in response to a perceptual model associated with the input signal.

9.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising ~~the step of~~ including an indication in the user data element of the presence of re-encoded data in the user data element.

10.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising ~~the step of~~ including additional data in the user data element.

11.(original) A method as claimed in claim 10 wherein the additional data comprises a watermark.

12.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 10 further comprising ~~the step of~~ encrypting at least part of the additional data.

13.(original) A method as claimed in claim 10 wherein the additional data comprises data selected from the group consisting of:

        a.   revocation data;

        b.   digital rights management information data; and

        c.   checksum data.

14.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the ~~step of~~ re-encoding the non-essential information comprises encryption.

15.(original) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the input bitstream is an MPEG encoded bitstream of the input signal.

16.(original) A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein the non-essential information corresponds to higher frequency transform coefficients.

17.(currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein the ~~step of~~ extracting comprises extracting run-level pairs of the bitstream.

18.(currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 17 wherein at least some of the run-level pairs are the <u>last</u> run-level pairs ~~immediately~~ prior to an end of block indication.

19.(currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 17 wherein the ~~step of~~ re-encoding the non-essential pairs comprises re-encoding the run-level pairs using a different run length value to data word association than specified for MPEG.

20.(original) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the reduced bitstream and the input bitstream are both in accordance with the same encoding standard.

21.(original) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein a combined data rate of the re-encoded data and the reduced bitstream is equal or less than a data rate of the input bitstream.

22.(original) A computer program enabling the carrying out of a method according to claim 1.

23.(original) A record carrier comprising a computer program as claimed in claim 22.

24.(currently amended) A method for decoding an input bitstream for an input signal comprising ~~the steps of~~ :

receiving the input bitstream, the input bitstream comprising a reduced bitstream for the input signal;

receiving a user data element comprising encoded data associated with the input signal;

extracting the encoded data from the user data element;

re-encoding the encoded data to generate enhancement data compatible with an encoding of the input signal in the reduced bitstream; and

generating an output bitstream by combining the reduced bitstream and the enhancement data.

25.(original) A method as claimed in claim 24 wherein the encoded data of the user section is encoded in a format which is incompatible with an encoding format of the reduced bitstream.

26.(original) A method as claimed in claim 24 wherein the encoded data is encrypted and the step of re-encoding comprises decrypting the encoded data.

27.(original) A method as claimed in claim 24 wherein the input bitstream comprises an MPEG encoding of the input signal.

28.(currently amended)   A method as claimed in claim 24 further comprising the step of extracting additional data from the user data element.

29.(original) A method as claimed in claim 24 wherein the additional data is a watermark.

30.(original) A method as claimed in claim 24 wherein the user data element is a user data section of the input bitstream.

31.(original) A computer program enabling the carrying out of a method according to claim 24.

32.(currently amended)   A record carrier comprising a computer program as claimed in claim 31 [[28]].

33.(currently amended)   An apparatus (101) for encoding an input bitstream of an input signal, the apparatus (101) comprising:

   means (109) for receiving the input bitstream;

   means (111) for extracting non-essential information from the bitstream to generate a reduced bitstream;

   means (113) for re-encoding the non-essential information to generate re-encoded data in accordance with a different encoding rule than used for encoding the non-essential information in the bitstream; and

   means (115) for including the re-encoded data in a user data element associated with the reduced bitstream.

34.(currently amended)   A apparatus (107) for decoding an input bitstream for an input signal, the apparatus (107) comprising:

   means (117) for receiving the input bitstream, the input bitstream comprising a reduced bitstream associated with the input signal;

   means (117) for receiving a user data element comprising encoded data for the input signal;

   means (119) for extracting the encoded data from the user data element;

   means (121) for re-encoding the encoded data to generate enhancement data compatible with an encoding of the input signal in the reduced bitstream; and

   means (123) for generating an output bitstream by combining the reduced bitstream and the enhancement data.

35.(currently amended)   A bitstream embodied on a computer readable medium, comprising a reduced bitstream section corresponding to an encoding of a content signal and a user data section comprising encoded data for the input signal encoded in a different format than an encoding format of the reduced bitstream section, wherein

said user data section includes re-encoded extracted non-essential information from the input bitstream.